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Effective Communication in the Performance Appraisal Interview: Face-to-Face Communication for Public Managers in the Culturally Diverse Workplace

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This article first restates and then extends a thesis about the performance appraisal process first published in this journal almost 15 years ago -that the public manager's performance in the face-to-face encounter of "the appraisal interview itself is the Achilles' heel of the entire process." This 1983 article held that many public managers experience discomfort approaching the actual performance appraisal interview and difficulty in conducting it. For they usually are untrained, and may even be unaware of the scholarly work that has identified the skills that make for more effective face-to-face communication. At that time the published literature in this area offered little help to public managers, so the 1983 article presented six specific "microcommunication skills" to help public managers communicate more effectively in the performance appraisal interview.

This article restates those six microcommunication skills, and extends its 1983 thesis of their importance for two reasons - first, a significant but passing management approach; and second, a major shift in the demographic composition of the United States. Both of these factors have profound implications for face-to-face communication.

The widespread adoption of the Total Quality Management (TQM) movement by public and private organizations has stimulated an attack upon the formal performance appraisal process in general, and, more specifically, upon the performance appraisal interview itself. Scholars and managers who are TQM advocates suggest that the adoption of TQM reduces, modifies or even eliminates the need for the formal performance appraisal process and the interview itself. This article takes a slightly different position. It holds that an organization's adoption of Total Quality Management increases the incidence and importance of effective face-to-face communication.

The demographic shift in America's population and work force will have an even more profound effect upon interpersonal communication. By 2050, about half of Americans will be African American, Hispanic, and Asian American, and about half will be white. The United States is becoming a much more culturally diverse nation. The problems of face-to-face communication in an essentially monocultural work force may be insignificant compared to the interpersonal communication difficulties which may accompany the more culturally diverse work force that is forecast.

This article concludes by reviewing the previous models that have conceptualized interpersonal communication. It then presents a theoretical model, which may assist managers and stimulate scholarly research in the increasingly important area of face-to-face communication in culturally diverse organizational settings.

"Performance appraisal appears to be a simple management tool. Yet experience demonstrates just the opposite. That members of an organization should know how they are performing is obvious. And the superiors should tell subordinates about their performance is equally obvious. Yet some superiors avoid this crucial task, while others experience anxiety and discomfort doing it.

There has been considerable progress in improving the instruments of performance appraisal systems ... Yet a paradox exists. A review of the literature indicates that much of the research and publications in this area have focused upon the empirical means by which to appraise performance - the development of the methodologies and the construction of the instruments by which to more objectively and validly measure employee performance. But despite considerable progress in a number of these areas, the delivery of the performance appraisal still tends to be resisted, if not avoided, by many managers because the central source of difficulty still remains. This occurs when the manager sits down to review his subordinate's performance. The appraisal interview itself is the Achilles heel of the entire process. ...despite strong pressures, managers are often reluctant and anxious about the appraisal interview. They often dislike the face-to-face encounter and feel unskilled in performing the vital appraisal interview into which all prior efforts flow.

There is good reason for this. A review by these authors of 351 recent journal articles related to performance appraisal found only a handful that focused on the appraisal interview itself. Those which did tended to fall into one of two categories. Some sought to identify and measure the behaviors and dynamics of the appraisal interview according to empirical and statistical methods, the others typically took a general, vague and often contradictory "maxims" approach which offered little more than organized common sense to the manager who must conduct the actual interview itself."¹

Face-To-Face Communication In The Performance Appraisal Interview: "Its Deja Vu All Over Again"

Yogi Berra's redundant insight rings in one's ears as one rereads the words just above, published in this journal close to 15 years ago. Years later, there appear to be few compelling reasons to alter the judgements then expressed.

The bulk of scholarship in this sector of the public management literature still focuses on empirically examining the design, correlates, or outcome of the performance appraisal instrument. There still is little published work in the area of interpersonal communication in the organizational setting, especially in the context of the performance appraisal interview. This is surprising for both general and specific reasons. Managers generally spend more time engaging in interpersonal communication than in any other activity. An the specific need for effective face-to-face communication is nowhere more critical than in the performance appraisal interview.

Few general aspects of organizational life are more paradoxical than interpersonal communication. One of the most valuable skills that a manager can possess is the ability to effectively communicate with others. In a classic study, Henry Mintzberg concluded that private sector managers typically spend approximately 80 percent of their time communicating with others.² Yet another classic study indicates that in no more than half the instances studied did a subordinate receive the message sent by the superior.³ One conclusion to be drawn is that interpersonal communication is among the most central,

yet least effective, activities of organizational life. Organizations echo too frequently the refrain: "But I thought I told you to ..." followed by "But I thought you said that ..."

Interest in performance appraisal at the federal level increased with the passage of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, the most sweeping reform of the federal civil service since the Pendleton Act of 1883. The Civil Service Reform Act mandated merit pay for mid-level managers, and called for "periodic appraisals of job performance of employees," and to "encourage employee participation in establishing performance objectives."⁴ Since its implementation at the federal level in 1981, performance management has gone through several reforms in the search for the "holy grail" of performance management system.⁵ What has been the experience? In studying the immediate period between 1979-1986, Dennis Daley found that "the percentage of (federal) employees who indicated that they had participated in the setting of their performance objectives has markedly declined. In fact, a majority now claims not to share in this task." It should be no surprise that even then Daley concluded

The objectives based performance appraisal system mandated by the Civil Service Reform Act was to be the foundation upon which many of the other reforms were to be built. Yet, public employee attitudes hardly differ from those held previously. In fact, if anything, perception of the performance appraisal process have gotten worse As with previous attempts at implementing participative mechanisms, success appears to have eluded the federal system.⁶

Success may be elusive until the importance of face-to-face communication is recognized. Gary E. Roberts' research at the municipal level of government led him to conclude that the second most important factor leading to employee acceptance of performance appraisal is the face-to-face communication that he defines as "employee voice." ...the degree of perceived employee participation in the appraisal interview and goal setting. Goal setting and participation grants the ratee an opportunity to rebut inaccurate performance appraisal information, to present new information, to present alternative explanations (attributions), to increase congruency of performance appraisal information interpretation, and to develop more valid measures of performance ... employee participation is critical in gaining the initial acceptance and understanding that is essential for effective implementation ...⁷

This is similar to a 1983 conclusion that: "a key ingredient for a successful performance appraisal interview has been found to be "ownership," the psychological concept of participation by the subordinate whereby they feel encouraged to speak and offer their views ... Employees are more satisfied with their appraisal interviews and with their superiors who conduct them when they participate more in the appraisal process, more particularly in the interview itself."⁸ Effective interpersonal communication is as crucial today as it was then to ratee acceptance of the process of performance appraisal.

Roberts goes on to enumerate the personal, professional, and systemic benefits of face-to-face communication to performance appraisal raters:

It is important to educate raters on the importance of involving the ratee in the appraisal process through a genuine invitation to participate. Raters should be made aware that they do not possess all relevant performance information and that the employee is an extremely important source. Greater employee participation and goal setting can refocus the process from an adversarial to a cooperative and coaching atmosphere, thereby reducing tension, defensive behavior, and rater-ratee conflict. Another factor that is important is the cultivation of regular, ongoing informal feedback. Regular informal feedback increases communication and understanding of job requirements, employee attitudes and feelings, and progress. Specific, behavioral, and timely feedback is critical for performance improvement and it is unlikely that once a year performance appraisal can meet employee feedback requirements.⁹

Performance Appraisal And Total Quality Management

Here the line begins to blur between performance appraisal systems and Total Quality Management (TQM) - the influential management movement fostered by W Edwards Deming. TQM emphasizes the operations of an organization's work processes over and above the performance of any individual employee. Some TQM advocates urge abolishing the performance appraisal ratings of individuals, if not the interview and system itself. According to the TQM approach, contemporary organizations will become more productive and quality-oriented if the emphases are on: (a) participation in the work group, not individual performance; (b) continual improvement of work processes, rather than conformity with them; (c) continual, not once-a-year, evaluation and feedback; and (d) a shift from the hierarchical, industrial-era, command-and control Weberian paradigm which "separated thinkers and doers," to a more egalitarian, collaborative, participative informational-era paradigm in which face-to-face communication is key:

Continuous improvement is revolutionary because it requires cooperation between thinkers and doers. Indeed, TQM encourages doers to think - a new way of managing. Increased productivity involves reducing waste in producing and supplying services and products. A public agency or a private firm must utilize all its human resources to do this, and adopt a mindset that any and everything can be improved. It is increasingly obvious that the only sustainable advantage to an organization is its people. Traditional management attempts to improve performance by controlling employees; it confuses fear with discipline. TQM ensures that planning, organizing, staffing and direction take place by promoting teamwork, coaching, listening and leading; processes are measured instead of people, and performance measurements are integrated into daily activities to meet real needs. Everyone is expected to assume responsibility for problem-solving to ensure quality and productivity.¹⁰

All of which underlines the centrality of effective face-to-face communication between colleagues in the workplace - whether an organization's traditional performance appraisal interviews remain, are substantially modified, or are abolished and replaced by a TQM approach. In 1983 we found that very little was available in the public management literature to help working public managers communicate more effectively in what remains the "Achilles heel" of the performance appraisal process - face-to-face performance appraisal interview itself. That judgement still appears to hold.

One otherwise sound program that trained public managers to become more effective performance appraisers allocated only limited time to sharpening interpersonal communication skills. And then only under such general "maxim" headings as "emphasize active listening," and "maintain communication."¹¹ The very title of an article: "Performance Appraisal" An Unnerving, Yet Useful Process" belies both the "foremost ... need for clear and open communication ... in performance appraisal interviews on the part of both supervisors and employees," as well as the uncomfortable attitude many managers still hold toward them.¹²

Two recent articles may be representative of the few that are published on interpersonal communication in the public management literature. One is a wonderfully stimulating but philosophical discourse on listening.¹³ The other is an all-too-brief extension and application of the approach traditionally called active listening.¹⁴ James Goodale's assessment may be contemporaneously and broadly applicable to the entire public management profession: "Although the most important step in performance appraisal is the discussion between the manager and employee, managers are seldom well trained in how to conduct these discussions ... and how to conduct performance appraisal interviews."¹⁵

The remainder of this paper addresses the most elementary, yet underserved, of all public management skills - face-to-face communication in the organizational setting. It is divided into three sections. The first section will restate in a one-at-a-time, learnable fashion the "microskills" of face-to-face communication that we conveyed in this journal in 1983. The second section will examine the more culturally-diverse demographics of the future U.S. population and work force, which were first identified by the pathbreaking study Workforce 2000. The third and final section of this paper will treat a new theoretical model on face-to-face intercultural communication, which may assist public managers.

The Microskills Approach To More Effective Face-To-Face Communication

For more than two decades, Alan Ivey, interpersonal communication theorist at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, has sought to identify and convey the elements involved in effective verbal and non-verbal face-to-face intercultural communication. Ivey identified and assembled these elements into a set of communication skill units that he terms the "microskills." Tested in hundreds of data-based field studies, adopted for training by scores of organizations ranging from Global Fortune 500

corporations such as Digital, Prime Computer (USA), Ericsson (Sweden), and Siemens (Germany), to the U.S. State Department and Central Intelligence Agency, and translated into fourteen languages - the microskills approach clearly is a tested and proven method for improving interpersonal communication in many different settings.

The microskills were originally developed for use in the most intimate and intense face-to-face interactions, the psychological therapy session. But they have been found to be useful in daily interactions with individuals in any setting, and have been widely utilized and proven in an array of organizations. The microskills are well suited to the needs of managers in the public sector - especially in the often stressful situation of the performance appraisal interview.¹⁶

Six microskills will be introduced here. They operate upon the principle that effective interpersonal communication does not begin when a superior engages in "downward" communication with a subordinate. Rather, as Peter Drucker pointed out: "Communication is the act of the recipient." Emphasizing the subordinate in this context, Drucker continued: "downward communications cannot work and do not work. They come after upward communications have been successfully established."¹⁷ Public managers need to recognize that downward communication by a superior is more effective when it follows, rather than precedes (or even worse, preempts) upward communication by a subordinate. Otherwise, the subordinate may not yet be ready to listen, while the superior may not be told the additional information that may be necessary for a sound decision. The effective use of the microskills specifically encourages the participation and upward flow of communication from appraisee to appraiser. What are the specific microskills?

The Basic Nonverbal Attending Microskills

Encouraging effective face-to-face communication basically begins by nonverbally "attending" to another individual. In the performance appraisal interview this means that the superior sits with a slight, but comfortable forward lean of the upper body trunk, maintains eye contact, and speaks in as steady, warm and soothing a voice as possible.

Engaging in such behavior may seem unnecessary, and even outlandish at first. Until one learns that Ray Birdwhistell, a pioneering scholar in the field, estimated that 65-70% of all face-to-face communication is nonverbal.

These attending skills (popularly called "body language") may seem elementary at first. But before we make this our final judgement, perhaps we need to ask ourselves two questions - did we previously know of these basic attending skills, and do we consciously use them on an everyday basis?

One way to sense the importance of the attending skills is to imagine how you would feel if your performance was being appraised by an individual who leaned backward (not forward) in his chair,

avoided eye contact, and spoke to you in a harsh, grating voice. The effective use of the non-verbal attending skills subtly but powerfully encourages other individuals to communicate with us.

Open and Closed Questions

Open and closed questions help the superior stay on the topic, and verbally "follow" the subordinate to ensure, in one case, the most general and, in the other case, the most specific flow of communication. Each type of question bears a different fruit: open questions encourage the subordinate to provide more general information; closed questions encourage more specific responses.

Open questions are just that - open. One asks an open question by beginning with the words "Could," "Would," "How," "What," or "Why?" Asked non-judgmentally, they encourage more lengthy, general responses. Open questions are particularly suitable at the beginning of the appraisal interview, or where the superior seeks to explore or understand a particularly complex or ambiguous area.

Closed questions are useful in clarifying, or nailing down specific pieces of information. They help focus the conversation upon narrow areas, or upon the retrieval of specific facts. Closed questions typically begin with "Did," "Is," or "Ire." Closed questions evoke a response of one ("Yes" or "No"), or just a few words.

The power of open and closed questions to evoke different responses is demonstrated by imagining the spontaneous response to the same query asked first as an "open," and then as a "closed" question:

Open question: "How is that new budget coming along?"

Closed question: "Is that new budget in?"

Paraphrasing

A paraphrase is a concise restatement in your own words of what another individual just has said. Effective paraphrasing clarifies for the superior, and permits the in-depth exploration of issues. It also indicates to others that you are "on the same wavelength," thereby encouraging them to communicate further. Remember that the paraphrase should also be non-judgmental, literal, matter-of-fact, and factual. The effective paraphrase has a sequential structure. First, there is the introductory stem: "If I heard you correctly ..." "You're saying that ..." or "It seems that what you're telling me is ..." The paraphrase follows, which is the concise restatement in your own words of what the subordinate has just said. The structure of a paraphrase ends with closing stems such as "Is that close?" or "Is that what you're telling me?" Such concluding stems allow you to check the accuracy of your paraphrase, while encouraging a response.

Appraisee: "...So the regional office problem is why our caseloads are down."

Appraiser: "You're saying that the new Regional Director's staff shakeups have lowered productivity. And that now it's spilled over into your office. Is that about right?" Appraisee: "Yes. And what's more..."

Reflection of Feeling

Emotions play a central, if sensitive, role in interpersonal communication. To bottle up emotions may be to inhibit communication. While it often may be considered difficult or inappropriate to express or deal with emotions in the workplace, we tend to feel better when we do---and more positively toward an individual who seems to "understand" how we feel. Norman Sigband, an early scholar of managerial communication, defined interpersonal communication as "the transmission and reception of ideas, feelings and attitudes---verbally and non-verbally---which produce a response." 20 Very simply, to effectively communicate is to take the human factor into account.

Similar to the paraphrase, the reflection of feeling is a literal, matter-of-fact, and timely restatement in our own words of the emotions we sense the other person is feeling. In so doing, we subtly encourage others to express the emotions they feel. At appropriate times, it may be helpful to encourage others to express their feelings before going on to more task-related activities.

The structure of the reflection of feeling is similar to that of the paraphrase. First, one uses the subordinate's first name, or the pronoun "you." Next follows the initial stem, such as: "It sounds like you feel ..." or "I hear you expressing some ..." Third, one labels the emotion. Then one mentions the context in which the expression of emotion occurred. One concludes with a final checking stem such as: "Am I right?" or "Is that about right?"

- "Hank, I sense that you're really anxious about this meeting. Am I about right?"

- "Jane, you seem to be feeling frustrated about your performance in this area. Is that about right?"

Some important, cautionary advice. Public managers are not psychologists; individuals with serious problems should be referred to the proper professional for help. In addition, the knowledge and practice of these skills (like knowledge itself) can be put to ethical or unethical uses. The reflection of feeling is among the most powerful as well as dangerous of microskills. The insincere or expedient use of this skill can severely damage a trusting relationship with an individual. Yet, there are moments when knowing how to exhibit a chord of genuine human concern, when giving other people a chance to express how they feel, can help them deal more effectively with their problems on and off the job.²¹ One of the special strengths of the microskills is that each one can be practiced on a self-paced, one-at-a-time basis until it becomes a natural part of one's repertoire of face-to-face communication skills. The microskills can help a public manager communicate more effectively with individuals in any organizational situation - particularly the neglected, but crucial part of the performance appraisal process, the face-to-face interview in which the appraisal itself is delivered and discussed.²² We have long known that how we communicate may depend upon whom we are communicating with - superior or subordinate, friend or

stranger. But how and whom we are communicating with at work is changing in a new and dramatic way, and will change still more the further the United States progresses into a demographically different twenty-first century. The shifting demographics of the workplace could have profound implications upon face-to-face communication. Feedback

The public manager's conscious use of the microskills of feedback provides a set of verbal channels to more effectively communicate with another individual. The effective use of the feedback skill involves: (1) clear and concrete data; (2) conveyed (as much as possible) via timely, present-tense statements; while (3) employing non-judgmental, literal, matter-of-fact attitudes and behaviors about (4) correctable items over which the subordinate has some control.

The effective use of feedback first involves clear and concrete data: Vague: "Your work with clients has been very good this year." Concrete: "This year you've increased placements by 20% while cutting complaints in half"

The second characteristic of the feedback skill involves employing nonjudgmental statements. Judgmental statements evoke emotions, particularly if those judgements are negative, as can occur in an appraisal interview. The negatively judgmental statement uttered by a superior may be perceived by a subordinate as an "offensive attack," to which his or her most natural response may be to "defensively" respond. Thus, a cycle may be established which hardly encourages the open communication that is prerequisite to positive behavioral change - one of the goals of the performance appraisal process.

The next characteristic of feedback urges the use of non-judgmental statements that are literal, matter-of-fact, and factual. Judgmental: "You're terrible in meetings with other people. Every time I take you, you foul things up."

Non-judgmental: "You seem to be too eager in meetings. Your behavior could be interpreted as too pushy, and turn people off." A fourth characteristic of the feedback skill is the timely present-tense statement. While performance appraisal by its nature deals with previous behaviors, consciously choosing to deal with more recent incidences can be a powerful agent for more positive change. Distant Past Feedback:

"Harry, you've messed up your budget for the past three years, and this time I've had enough of it."

Timely/Present-Tense Feedback:

"Harry, I've just made some specific suggestions to you on how you can improve this year's budget preparation. But you don't sound too enthusiastic about them. How can I help you become more effective in your budget preparation?"

Finally feedback deals with correctable items over which the subordinate has some control. It may be of dubious value to ask a somewhat shy, but otherwise effective employee, "Why don't you spend more

time socializing with us and become more a part of the office team?" Workforce 2000 And The Future Demographic Composition Of America Only a small, specialized community usually pays attention to demographic projections about the composition of America's labor force. The 1987 publication of Workforce 2000 was an exception - chief because of its well-known forecast that native-born white males would comprise only 15 percent of "net new entrants" to the labor force between 1985 and 2000. The remaining 85 percent of "net work force entrants" are forecast to be white women, African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Americans and other races, as well as Third World Immigrants.²³ There has long been a widespread and erroneous perception about this key forecast. As late as 1994, Fortune magazine was reporting: "Nearly 85% of the 25 million entering the labor pool would be women, minorities, or immigrants ... only 15% would be white males."²⁴ An otherwise original and perceptive research article on diversity in this very journal began: "It has been predicted that during the decade of the 1990s at least 85% of new entrants to the labor pool from which U.S. organizations select their employees, will be women, minorities, and foreign immigrants."²⁵ The erroneous understanding attributed to this forecast lies in its technical use of the word "net" - of which journalists and even scholars who are not professional demographers may be unaware. In their 1991 study, *The Myth of the Coming Labor Shortage*, Lawrence Mishel and Ruy A. Teixeira criticized Workforce 2000's central forecast. They argued that the "total," not the "net," number of work force entrants would be a more realistically appropriate word to use: For example, in an economy of 100 workers, 20 workers might come into the work force over ten years, while ten retired over the same period of time, resulting in a work force of 110 (100 + 20 - 10) at the end of the period. But, despite the fact that the net increase in the work force was only 10 (110 - 100), the actual number of work force entrants should still be set at 20, so that we can include the ten workers who replaced those retiring.²⁶

Workforce 2000 technically (and correctly) categorized native-born white males as only 15 percent of "net additions" to the labor force - a figure arrived at by subtracting the native-born white male replacements exiting the labor force from the total number entering it. But according to Mishel and Teixeira, actual native-born white males "will actually be almost one third (32 percent) of total work entrants" (emphasis in original).

Forecasts of U.S. Labor Force, 1994-2005

Recently, Howard N. Fullerton, Bureau of Labor Statistics specialist in work force forecasts, compared the U.S. work force over two 11 year periods -1982-1993 and 1994-2005. Looking ahead, he projects a more diverse labor force. ²⁷ Looking first at forecasts of the total male, and then white male work force composition:

- Males (56.7% of the 1982 work force) will decline to 50.1% of new entrants between 1994 and 2005, and are projected to comprise 52.2% of 2005's work force;

- White males (46% of the 1982 labor force and its historical "mainstay") are forecast to be a rapidly declining, but still substantial 33% of total labor force entrants between 1994 and 2005 (and 38.4% of 2005's work force).²⁸

In the short run, native-born white males will continue to comprise a larger (though declining) percentage of the labor force than many currently believe. For example, native-born white males made up 42 percent of the labor force in 1993, and are forecast to account for 38 percent of the work force in 2005. One of the shrewdest assayers of managing diversity, Taylor Cox, points out, "American white males will continue to be the single largest gender/race identity group in the U.S. work force for many years."²⁹ Females, especially native-born white females, are forecast to comprise a slowly-increasing but substantial presence in the labor force. Between 1982-2005:

-Females (43% of the 1982 labor force) are projected to increase to 49.9% of the new entrants between 1994 and 2005 (and 47.8% of 2005's work force); while -White females (34.9 percent of 1982's labor force) are forecast to be 33.4 percent of work force entrants between 1994 and 2005 (and hold steadily at 33.7% of 2005's workforce).³⁰

So white, native-born, non-Hispanic males and females (whose largest age cohort are aging baby boomers) are forecast to make up 73.7 percent of 2005's work force (down from 81.2% in 1982).

³¹America's more diverse labor force is first emerging among its younger age cohorts. Between 1982-2005, African Americans, Hispanics, and Asian Americans and other races will be joining the U.S. work force in record numbers: - African Americans (10.2% of the 1982 work force) are forecast to make up 12.4% of new entrants between 1994 and 2005, and will slightly increase to 4.1% of 2005's work force.³²

These changes are but part of a larger and dramatic demographic shift that will transform American society. The most recent Bureau of the Census forecast of U.S. population is instructive.³³ Native-born whites who comprised 80% of the U.S. population in 1980 are forecasted to make up about 60% of the population in 2030, and a little over half of all Americans two decades later. Black Americans are projected to increase slightly from 11.5% of the population in 1980 to 13.6% in 2050. While about one in sixteen Americans was Hispanic in 1980, in 2030 about one in five is forecast to be Hispanic, and about one in four in 2050. Starting from a smaller base, Asian Americans are projected to increase from 1.5% in 1980 to over 6% in 2030, and over 8% of the U.S. population in 2050.³⁴

There is another factor to keep in mind: the ethnic or racial composition of America's age cohorts may be different from the nation at-large. Due to differential birth rates among various ethnic and racial groups, legal and illegal immigration, and the presence of the largest age cohort - the baby boomers (who comprise approximately one-third of U.S. population, but somewhat less than one-half of its work force) - America's generations are changing their ethnic mix at varied rates. For example, in the year

2000, fewer than 66 percent of American schoolchildren, but 80 percent of Americans over age 45, are forecast to be native-born, non-Hispanic whites.³⁵ Census Bureau demographers forecast that by 2030, non-Hispanic whites will comprise three-fourths of those over age 65, but fewer than half of those under age 18. In announcing the latest demographic forecasts, Gregory Spencer, Director of the Population Projections Branch of the Census Bureau, stated: "The world is not going to be the same in 30 years as it is now."³⁶ As the baby boomers age and begin to retire early in the 21st century, what already is a perceptible flow of demographic change in the workplace will become a strong tide.

Given the pace at which organizational cultures change, wise managers will begin preparing themselves and their organizations now. Examining these developments, demographer Martha Farnsworth Riche recent concluded:

These trends signal a transition to a multicultural society. If you count men and women as separate groups, all Americans are members of at least one minority group ... The trend is clear. If current conditions continue, the United States will become a nation with no racial or ethnic majority during the 21st century.³⁷ A Culturally Diverse Workforce Astute public managers may find the concept of culture to be of increasing utility in an increasingly diverse United States. In dealing with "foreigners" from other societies, Americans are not surprised to discover that certain cultural differences exist - for example, between Americans and the Japanese (whose culture is quite different), as well as with the English (whose culture is quite similar). But Americans may not yet recognize a growing new reality: that subcultural "differences" also may exist among Americans who share the same strong, overarching identity as Americans, and pledge their common allegiance as citizens to the same national political values, processes, and institutions.

The recognition of cultural differences is not new. In 1976, Harry Triandis, one of the founding scholars of intercultural communication in the U.S., wrote:

In many countries, the population is polyethnic. This is the case in the United States, where a number of distinct groups (i.e., blacks ... Latin Americans, to mention just a few) enjoy cultural traditions that are different from the traditions of the White, Anglo-Saxon or melting pot produced majority ... Such ... cultures lead members of a cultural or ethnic group to behave in characteristic ways and to perceive their own behavior and the behavior of others in a particular manner.³⁸

For example, eye contact patterns of some whites and some African Americans may culturally differ and, unless understood, can cause misunderstanding. The expectation by managers of the dominant white culture is that individuals and/or subordinates will maintain direct eye contact while listening. But in the slave-owning and then segregationist South, subordinate blacks were culturally encouraged not to look at, but rather away from, older persons and authority figures while listening.³⁹ So unless a white manager is aware of how to subculturally "decode" African American cultural behavior, a black gaze

pattern meant to be respectful may be misunderstood as disrespectful. It may at first seem awkward to apply the concept of culture to individuals who are African American, Hispanic, Asian American, or even white. It may seem even more unusual to apply it to the genders. But, consider the conclusion of Dr. Deborah Tannen, sociolinguist and author of the best-seller *You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation*, on the subject of face-to-face communication between the genders: Much as I understand and am in sympathy with those who wish there were no differences between women and men--only reparable social injustice--my research, others' research and my own and others experience tell me it simply isn't so. There are gender differences in ways of speaking, and we need to identify and understand them. Without such understanding, we are doomed to blame others or ourselves--or the relationship--for the otherwise mystifying and damaging effects of our contrasting conversational styles. The sociolinguistic approach I take in this book shows that many frictions arise because boys and girls grow up in what are essentially different cultures, so talk between women and men is cross-cultural communication.⁴⁰ And as an article on the culturally diverse workplace that was recently published in this journal concluded: These results suggest that men, women, and minorities do not share a common culture of organizational life; rather, each group identifies, defines and organizes its experience in the organization in unique ways. The answers to the survey questions...indicate that men, women and minorities have different experiences in the organization.. We believe that studies such as the one reported in here provide a valuable function in documenting the different cultural realities within organizations. ⁴¹ Today, the proactive white male public manager, along with the proactive female, African American, Latino American, or Asian American public manager, realize that they need to learn more about the culture and communication styles of each other. Is there a model of interpersonal communication which can help bring this about? How do we communicate effectively in this new demographic as well as cultural context? *Models for Effective Interpersonal Communication: A New Model Needed for the Culturally Diverse Workplace* Psychologist Kurt Lewin once wrote "There is nothing so practical as a good theory." Abstract theories provide powerful guides for human thought and behavior. If this is so, public managers may benefit from a review of previous models of interpersonal communication, as well as a new theoretical model--one which reflects the more culturally diverse era that America has entered.

The first modern model of a communication system was published in 1949 by research mathematician Claude Shannon and electrical engineer Warren Weaver.⁴² Shannon and Weaver depicted communication as a simple, sequential and one-way linear process through which information could be transmitted as easily by a telephone as by a human. Their mechanistic system included four components: a sender, a channel, a message, and a receiver.

Public managers will be more familiar with the next major development, David Berlo's widely-known model of interpersonal communication.⁴³ Specifically trying to understand "the way people

communicate with each other," Berlo saw interpersonal communication as an on-going, twoway process between human beings in which the communication behavior of each influences the understanding of the other. His model of communication had six components: a sender, a channel, a message, a receiver, as well as a sender/encoder and receiver/decoder capabilities, and finally an interactive feedback loop. Berlo's model follows: In Berlos' more complex model, the sender and receiver can encode and decode verbal as well as non-verbal messages, thus recognizing the importance of non-verbal communication. Most importantly, Berlo's model permits us to envision interpersonal communication as a mutually interactive, two-way process. Berlo's addition of a feedback loop to his model allowed us to see face-to-face communication not as a one-way, linear, action-reaction, but as a more complex, dynamic, mutually-reciprocal, ongoing process. The major deficiency of the Berlo model is that it provides little guidance in the area of face-to-face intercultural communication-just at the time when America's population and work force is becoming more culturally diverse. We need a new theoretical model of interpersonal communication to address this challenge.⁴⁴

Not Two People, but Four Participants: A New Model of Interpersonal Communication

Public managers may agree that few situations require more effective interpersonal communication skills than the psychological counseling session. Allen Ivey, originator of the microsills, noted that the changing cultural composition of America's population had increasingly transformed therapy sessions into intercultural meetings between therapist and client. Ivey therefore developed a model for more effective interpersonal communication in an intercultural context to address this increasingly common situation. He points out that interpersonal communication in an intercultural context may not involve communication simply between the two individuals who are physically present, therapist and client, but rather:

therapist and his or her cultural/historical background, and the client and his or her cultural/historical background...what sometimes appears to be the therapist talking with the client may actually be two cultural/historical backgrounds talking with each other.⁴⁵

To help us communicate effectively in a multicultural context, Ivey presents three models for interpersonal communication, two of which result in less effective communication than the third model.

In culturally diverse settings, Ivey has found that effective communication is more likely to occur when participants consciously operate with model A in mind. That is, when one takes into account both the individuality of the individual before you, as well as the cultural/historical background that might influence his or her manner of communication. Otherwise, public managers and colleagues may communicate only with each other as "individuals (B), thereby ignoring each other's cultural/historical backgrounds; or ignore the individual, and (C) stereotypically communicate with each other's cultural/historical backgrounds. To seek to communicate with everyone as an individual (B) may be

admirable, but also may serve to minimize, if not ignore, the powerful impact of culture and history on an individual. As one African American female manager stated, "I can't leave who I am or all I've been through at the office door every morning." We may find ourselves stereotyping if we communicate more with an individual's cultural/historical background than with the individual, which is often the unintended outcome of many cultural awareness diversity training programs. (Model C)

Public managers who consciously keep in mind the Ivey "Not Two People but Four Participants" model may find themselves communicating more effectively than when they unconsciously operated on the basis of the Berlo model.

Conclusions

Effective face-to-face communication is crucial to the successful manager. More effective interpersonal communication in any organizational situation, but especially in the performance appraisal interview, is possible if public managers recognize and adopt the proven and tested microskills approach. The widespread use of performance appraisals throughout all levels of public administration, but specifically mandated in the federal sector, makes improvements in face-to-face communication particularly important to public managers.

Effective interpersonal communication becomes more important in organizations that adopt the TQM approach, whatever the fate of the performance appraisal interview.

This article also carefully analyzed Workforce 2000's central forecast to provide an accurate picture of the more diverse society and labor force that is emerging. Today's American work force already is less monocultural and more culturally diverse than ever before. This trend will gather strength during the 1990s and into the 21st century as the largest age cohort in American history, the baby boomers, reaches retirement age in record numbers. The face-to-face communication problems of a monocultural work force can only intensify in a more culturally diverse context. A new theoretical model for effective interpersonal communication was proposed to reflect the increasingly culturally diverse context for interpersonal communication.

A recent survey identified the top two training priorities of a group of high-level human resource managers as (1) improving interpersonal communication skills, and (2) understanding/valuing cultural differences—the dual topics that this article has addressed. The author hopes that the applied contributions of this article will help line and staff public managers communicate more effectively in face-to-face situations. The author also hopes that the theoretical contributions of this article stimulate more scholarly research in this key, but overlooked, area. Given the scale, scope, and velocity of the transformation that lies ahead, it may be time to begin.

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